



Terrorism & Counter Strategies in Pakistan: People's

Perspective

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Abstract

Present study aims to explore the opinion of people regarding terrorism and what strategies they suggested to counter. This study also aimed to find out that whether national image is associated with terrorism or not. A quantitative survey was conducted and questionnaire was distributed to 1000 respondents residing/working in Islamabad. Findings show that respondents are of the opinion to take strong measures against all kinds of terrorism and terrorists activities from Pakistan to maintain Government's writ and to promote national image constructively.

Keyword: *Terrorism, Terrorists, People's opinion, counter strategies, newspaper readers*

Introduction

Since more than a decade Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism due to insurgencies in many parts of the country such as Baluchistan, Karachi, KPK, Tribal areas and Southern Punjab. In all these areas terrorists were actively involved in terrorist activities and insurgencies which have brought critical conflict. On the other hand Pakistan Government and security forces since 2000 are combating terrorism and conflicting situations across country. Gazdar (2006) stated that state security forces for 20 out of the last 35 years have been engaged in counter-insurgency operations.

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According to Siddiq (2016), the Pakistan Government and Pakistan Military took a unanimous decision to eradicate terrorism from the country. Crackdown operation was launched against terrorists and their supporters in Southern Punjab after the suicide attack in Lahore at "Gulshan-e-Jinnah Park" on March 28th, 2016, which killed 72 people including children (Dawn, March 29th, 2016).

A report compiled by the International Research Group, the Institute for Economics and Peace on Global Terrorism Index, stated that Pakistan is number-three following Iraq and Afghanistan in the list of states that have suffered from terrorism. According to this report, there were 1,933 terrorist activities in 2013 alone across the country causing 2,345 fatalities injuring 5,035 people. The report presents that there were a total of 776 attacks claimed by TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan). 12% of these 776 attacks were suicide attacks. The report also stated that on educational institutions with 150 death tolls there were more than 100 attacks carried out by terrorists. The report further articulates that with 10,000 worldwide attacks in 2013, Pakistan had a 37 % rise in deaths and a 28% rise in injuries since 2012 (Dawn, Nov 18, 2014).

Another report published in Express Tribune (June 14, 2015) Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) declared that approximately 837 hideouts of terrorists had been demolished in addition to detention of 253 tons of explosives during operation. Former DG (Director General) ISPR Major General Asim Bajwa stated via his Twitter account that 347 Pakistan's forces personnel embraced martyrdom, yielded 18,087 weapons including light

and heavy machine guns, rocket launchers, snipers and AK-47 which were recovered from terrorists hideouts. This operation was assisted with 9,000 intelligence based operations (IBOs) in metropolitan areas resulting in 218 terrorists being targeted. He praised the media for an optimistic attitude and further added that security forces would continue until the achievement of preferred results.

According to former DG (ISPR) Major General Asif Ghafoor, "Regarding the war on terror, Pakistan is only a success story in the world". (The News, 3rd January 2019). Brewer et.al (2003) mentioned that people are largely dependent on media for information; in this context, media could play a significant role in making and shaping perceptions of masses. Information provided through media significantly affects people's perception in different directions.

Most of the time media plays a significant role in defining strategies leading towards conflict resolution, conflict transformation or conflict prevention, and in this context, framing could be a key element in defining media's role. (Taylor, 1992, 1995 and 1997). It is observed that the public has suffered at large in Pakistan due to terrorism for years. It has affected public opinion by changing their stance towards dealing terrorism. Sadaf (2011) states that public opinion formation is also linked with the belief that what people perceive is a result of media exposure on different issues and found out that the prominence given by media greatly influences public perception.

Feldman (1999) defined perceptions as the sorting out of information, its interpretation, and finally analysis of that

interpretation. Lahlry (1991) defined perception as the interpretation of sensory data.

Another significant aspect regarding the perception relates to the phenomenon that media content artificially inflated viewers' perceptions of their political knowledge (Hollander, 1995; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

Giving detailed insight, it is mentioned that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, race or nationality. UN Security Council's resolution, 1566 in 2004, describes a criterion to characterize terrorism i.e., intent, purpose, specific conduct and explains as per follows.

"Criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent of causing death or serious bodily injury, or the taking of hostages; regardless of whether motivated by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature, to provoke a state of terror in the general public or a group of individuals or particular individuals, intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to carry out or to abstain from carrying out any act; and which constitute offenses within the scope of, and as defined in, the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism." (p.29)

Media can play a variety of roles in a society, including being educational, informative or entertaining. Press is a subset of media and is significantly associated with the term news media by providing timely news on happenings in society. Therefore the role of the media is considered as general, and the role of the press in particular. (Justine, 2012). Press has played a major role during

conflicts across the world. Talking about Pakistan, It is observed that there are various conflicts that have been observed since the beginning of the new millennium. They include suicide bombings, ethnic and racial conflicts, target killings, political instability, and religious disharmony, resulting in the launch of Military Operations across Pakistan after 2000. The Pakistani press's role became important in highlighting and presenting news stories according to the agenda news organization set related to Military Operations conducted in Pakistan. This has provided a space for the general public to make their opinions accordingly on the issue of terrorism that is prevailing in Pakistan's geographical boundaries since years. In the light of above literature, this study aims To explore the people's opinion regarding terrorism and counter strategies in the light of news represented in media.

Research Question

The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What is the opinion of people in Pakistan about terrorism?

RQ2: What are the counter strategies proposed by people against terrorism in the light of news reported in media?

Methodology

This research is quantitative in nature and conducted with the help of survey instrument. Since 1930's surveys or opinion polls have become dominant methodology to measure the public will. (Berinsky, 2017). Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993) defined a survey as a "means for gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people" (p. 77).

Population & Sampling procedure

Population for survey is newspapers readers. The targeted population was taken from Federal Capital The sample was extracted via purposive sampling procedure. Singh & Masuku (2014) mentioned that "sampling units are selected according to the purpose; this technique can be used only for some specific purpose" (p.3). They further state that there should be a careful selection of samples. "The fixation of the adequate sample size requires specific information about the problems under investigation in the population under study." (p.6)

The sample was extracted according to the rubrics of Wimmer & Dominick (2011). According to the instructions, statistical division per sample size is "0.50=very poor, 100=poor, 200= fair, 300=good, 500=very good, 1000=excellent" (p.103). The sample selected for present study was 1000 according to Wimmer & Dominick (2011) statistical division per size of sample, which categorized 1000 as an excellent sample size for surveying the population.

A self-administered questionnaire was developed and distributed among newspaper readers. Closed-ended questions on five point Likert scale and questions including demographics were added in order to explore the people's opinion regarding terrorism and what strategies they proposed to counter.

Total questionnaires distributed were 1000. the Researcher has used personal contacts to distribute the questionnaire among people who read newspapers. employees of different departments from the Educational and corporate sector were also included to the employees of different departments

focusing only those who read newspapers and have basic information regarding terrorism. Out of 1000 questionnaires, the response rate was 632. Out of which 79 were invalid due to 50% missing values, and 553 respondents who answered the filter question, hence included in analysis.

The survey questionnaire included items to explore respondent's opinion regarding media's representation of terrorism and its counter strategies in Pakistan proposed by respondents.

These items included;

- There should be a dialogue prior taking any strict action against terrorists.
- Prompt action should be taken to cut of terrorists support and their communication means.
- Maintenance of the Government's writ should be the priority across country to maintain law & order.
- There is a strong need to take measure against terrorism.
- Successful strategies in countering terrorism positively portrayed national image of Pakistan.
- Successful operations eradicating terrorism depict the strong writ of the state.
- Corrective action in the form of combat operations should be continued till the end of terrorism from Pakistan.
- General public is in favor of resilient assault against all extremist groups till the complete eradication of terrorism and terrorists from Pakistan

This showed that to what extent public has a position regarding terrorism and all types of terrorist's activities till the complete termination of terrorism from country.

Results & Analysis

Four age groups have been included in the survey to explore which age group responded well. Data reveals that out of 553 respondents, 319 with a percentage of 57.7% are from 20-30 years of age, 125(22.6%) are from 31-40 years of age. While 59 respondents with 10.7%, are from 41-50 years of age, and 50 (9.0%) are from the age group having 51 years & above. Out of 553 respondents, there were a total of 212 female respondents making 38.3%, whereas male respondents were 341 with 61.7%.

Results clearly indicate that males participated well in the survey as compared to females, as there was no clear proportion through which survey distributed.

Educational level of Respondents

Data showed that there was only one respondent who had matriculation with 0.2%, 14 (2.5%) intermediate, 172 (31.1%) had bachelor's degree, 188 respondents are Master's with 34.0%, MS/M. Phil were 88 (5.2%), 29 respondents are PhD's with 5.2%, whereas 61 respondents had other degrees like diploma, technical education, short courses etc.

According to results, mostly respondents had Master's degree followed by Bachelor's and then M. Phil/MS.

Occupation of Respondents

Out of 553 respondents, 245 were employed, 212 were un-employed, 77 were self-employed and 19 were retired.

This shows that mostly respondents were employed followed by un-employed and selfemployed. There is another

interesting exploration of result found out that only 3.4% of readers are retired from their workplaces or jobs.

Table 1: Respondent's occupation

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Employed	245	44.3
Un-employed	212	38.3
Self employed	77	13.9
Retired	19	3.4
Total	553	100.0

Respondents spending time in reading newspaper

A question was included in the survey i.e, how much time do you spend reading English newspaper daily. Following data generated the result:

Table 2: Respondents' spending time in reading newspaper

	Respondents	Percentage
15 minutes	214	38.7
30 minutes	136	24.6
45 minutes	84	15.2
An hour	78	14.1
More than an hour	41	7.4
Total	553	100

The above table shows that out of 553 respondents, the highest amount of respondents' i.e, 214 respondents (38.7%) read a newspaper for 15 minutes on daily basis, 136 respondents (24.6%) read for 30 minutes, 84 respondents (15.2%) read for 45 minutes, 78 respondents (14.1%) read for an hour whereas 41 respondents (7.4%) read for more than an hour on a daily basis. It

clearly shows that less number of respondents read newspapers for more time comparatively.

As mentioned the questionnaire comprises of different items exploring respondent's opinions regarding terrorism and its counter-strategies. For this specific aspect, research questions were developed and analyzed as per the following details.

RQ1: What is the opinion of people in Pakistan about terrorism?

To explore the people's opinion in Pakistan about terrorism, a question was asked with certain options i.e, in your opinion the following are the types of terrorism in Pakistan, generated following results.

Table 3: People's opinion about terrorism in Pakistan

In your opinion, the following are the types of terrorism in Pakistan?	Yes	No	Total
Target Killings	511 (92.4%)	42 (7.6%)	553 (100%)
Taking hostages	467(84.4%)	86(15.5%)	553(100.0%)
Causing death or injuries	519 (93 %)	34 (6.1%)	553 (100%)
Suicide bombings	516 (93.3%)	37 (6.7%)	553 (100%)

Data reveals that out of 553 respondents, 511 believed that target killing is the type of terrorism in Pakistan and people suffered more comparatively, 42 respondents (7,6%) were not in favor. 467 opined in taking hostages, 86 (15.5%) were against the notion i.e, if some personnel to be taken as hostage by any terrorist or unknown group is not considered as a form of terrorism, 519 were agreed with the notion that if someone causing death or injuries to other person it comes under terrorism, but 34

respondents (6.1%) were not favored this concept. Similarly 516 out of 553 respondents opined that suicide bombing is one of the aspects of terrorism people have faced in Pakistan since years which has brought fear among society, on the other hand 37 respondents (6.7%) did not consider suicide bombing as a form of terrorism.

RQ2: What are the counter strategies proposed by people against terrorism?

To explore the counter strategies proposed by respondents, different items were included in questionnaire. These are discussed as per follows:

In a statement that prompt action should be taken to cut of terrorists support and their communication means, 82.6% agreed and 2.48% disagreed while 14.8% respondents stayed neutral.

Mostly respondents believe there should be a dialogue prior taking any strict action against terrorists. Therefore 76.3% were in favor and 2.5% were against. Detailed statistics showed in table below.

A question was asked to respondents that what should be the best counter strategy against terrorism, comparing the two aspects. First is to take prompt action against terrorism and second is to initiate a dialogue with terrorists groups. Detail of responses by respondents is mentioned in the following table:

Table 4: Combating terrorism via Prompt action or Dialogue

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
Prompt Action	N=217 (39.2%)	N=240 (43.4%)	N=72 (14.8%)	N=8 (1.4%)	N=6 (1.08%)	N=553 (100.0%)
Dialogue	N=136 (24.6%)	N=286 51.7%	N=117 (21.1%)	N=9 (1.6%)	N=5 (0.9%)	Total= 553 (100.0%)

Above table reveals that 457 respondents (82.6%) agreed with the notion that prompt action should be taken against terrorism, whereas 14 respondents disagreed and 72 (14.8%) stayed neutral.

Similarly, 422 respondents (76.3%) opined in favor of dialogue, 14 disagreed and 117 respondents (21.1%) stayed neutral.

Another important dimension regarding national image, maintenance of Government's writ and strong measure against terrorism included in the instrument. Following data reveals results.

470 respondents believed that successful strategies in countering terrorism positively portrayed national image of Pakistan, 17 respondents (3.1%) disagreed and 66 respondents stayed neutral. . This is directly linked with the maintenance of Govt. writ with strong measures to take against terrorism and terrorist activities. Out of 553 respondents, 266 agreed that maintenance of the Government's writ is one of the prime objectives of Military operations in affected parts of the country, whereas 43 disagreed and 244 stayed neutral with the notion.

500 respondents believed that strong measures have to take against terrorism, 39 stayed neutral while 14 respondents did not favor the notion to take strong measure against terrorism.

Table 5: People’s opinion regarding national image

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
National Image	N=259 (46.8%)	N=211 (38.2%)	N=66 (12.0%)	N=10 (1.8%)	N=7 (1.3%)	N=553 (100.0%)
Maintenance of Govt. Writ	N=99 (17.9%)	N= 167 (30.2%)	N=244 (44.1%)	N=28 (5.1%)	N=15 (2.7%)	N=553 (100.0%)
Strong measure against terrorism	N=368 (66.5%)	N=132 (23.9%)	N=39 (7.1%)	N=7 (1.3%)	N=7 (1.3%)	Total= 553 (100.0%)

Statistics showed that 489 respondents believe that corrective action in the form of combat operations should be continued till the end of terrorism from Pakistan, 18 respondents disagreed whereas 46 stayed neutral.

Similarly, 470 respondents revealed that general public is in favor of resilient assault against all extremist groups till the complete eradication of terrorism and terrorists from Pakistan, 65 respondents were neutral and 18 respondents with 3,3% did not favor the resilient assault.

Table 6: People's opinion regarding counter strategies for terrorism

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
						Total=
Corrective Action	N=334 (60.4%)	N=155 (28.0%)	N=46 (8.4%)	N=6 (1.1%)	N=12 (2.2%)	553 (100.0%)
Resilient Assault	N=282 (51.0%)	N=188 (34.0%)	N=65 (11.8%)	N=11 (2.0%)	N=7 (1.3%)	Total=553 (100.0%)

Data reveals that people (respondents) do believe that there should be defined counter strategies for combating terrorism till its complete eradication from Pakistan. It will not only discourage the antagonist elements from the country but will help to enhance the national image of Pakistan.

Discussion & Conclusion

Media plays an important role in guiding public opinion towards some specific direction on any issue of societal/national or international concern. This study has explored various aspects of public perceptions regarding terrorism and its relationship with newspapers' coverage on terrorism. The way newspapers presented these news stories reflects the policy of owners. Newspapers framed stories and tried to transfer their agenda to the public. This transference of media agenda helps making or guiding public opinion regarding terrorism and developing their stance to counter; hence media helped public in making public opinion which is the reflection of media agenda to a great extent. The portrayal of national image was a fundamental dimension of survey emphasizing dialogic communication between stakeholders and maintaining the writ of the state in affected parts of the country. Controlling terrorism or terrorists actually

portraying the strong writ of the state to maintain law and order across country. According to statistics, it is stated clearly that respondents believe in a notion that corrective measures should be taken against all kinds of terrorism to maintain writ of state. Also commencement of dialogue for peace promotes the constructive image of Pakistan.

National image being the important aspect of this study, which also depict how strongly or weakly a state tackles chaotic situations within a country. It also tells how law enforcing agencies are vigilant enough in combating terrorism. Trasheva (2014) refers national image as “a mental picture of a country created through media publications and consider the term image synonymous to representation”. (p.6)

Respondents do believe that portrayal of national image is strongly associated with the maintenance of Government writ and taking measures by security forces against terrorism and terrorist activities across country.

According to Paret (1989) “the framework for examining military capability as the output dimension of national power is patterned analogously to the larger framework for assessing national power.” Mann (1986) and Castells (2000) identified four sources of social power i.e, ideological, economic, military and political power. They further state that military power is about deployment of force against all types of threats. In short, ideological, economic, military and political power are roots for national branding.

Therefore, a strong relationship exists if government takes measure to promote national image practically and wiping

out all terrorist elements from the country. This explains the phenomenon of presenting country's image in a very constructive way for neither promoting terrorism nor supporting any terrorist activity. The data shows that respondents believe in taking strong measures to eradicate terrorism from Pakistan. They responded in favor of strong measures against terrorism, maintenance of Government's writ, corrective measure and resilient assault.

Chan (2007) stated that there is a need to guide public opinion. Guidance of public opinion deals with the public opinion management. And Pakistani media guided well in making people's opinion and making their stance regarding terrorism. In Pakistan main objectives of operations combating terrorism were to implement and maintain Government's writ and to uphold normal social life of common people as observed. A report issued by National Defense Research Institute discussed that operational objectives are defined as a natural outcome of military operations. It is clearly stated that for any military operations there are some fundamental national goals in addition to national security objectives. Report further talks about in promoting prosperity & democracy by protecting and improving the environment. It is mentioned that promoting stability through peace keeping efforts is the focus of national military objectives (Pirnie & Gardiner, 1996).

The study concluded that people believe in having corrective action and preventive measures to eradicate all kinds of terrorism from Pakistan. Respondents are in favor of resilient assault in order to maintain strong writ of state.

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